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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to clarify the characteristics of attachment styles in Japanese university students. Participating were 104 university students ranging in age from 18 to 26 years. Subjects completed the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) Scale, modified to include relationships in addition to romantic partners, and the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS). The findings suggested that students exhibited the same attachment styles in their most intimate relationship as they exhibited to people in general. On the ECR Scale, the preoccupied attachment style was not discriminated from the secure style. In comparison with the AAS, the preoccupied style on the ECR was not discriminated from the secure style on the AAS. Students showing the preoccupied attachment style on the ECR were securely attached as measured by the AAS. The incapability of discrimination between the preoccupied and the secure attachment style was partly due to the attachment style prototype based on behavioral patterns in American samples. (KB)

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The Characteristics of Attachment styles in Japanese Students

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The Characteristics of Attachment styles in Japanese Students

According to the studies using the Strange Situation procedure, Japanese infants cried more in separation and frequently made physical contact with mothers, although frequency of attachment security was not different from American one. Furthermore, in the Strange Situation procedure, A type was rare and C type was common as an insecure attachment style. These results in Japanese infants indicated that there are some characteristics of attachment styles specific to culture.

However, attachment styles in Japanese adults have rarely been examined by usually used attachment measures in the States. So it is not clear whether the similar characteristics shown in infants will be appeared in adults. Especially, in the case of Japanese adults, "Amae" concept might have important meanings to clarify characteristics of attachment styles, because relationship in Japanese is interpersonal and individuality is not valued so much.

The purpose of this study is to clarify the characteristics of attachment styles in Japanese students. Fortunately, Onishi (1998) developed a Japanese translation of her widely used US measure of romantic attachment, that is, Experiences in Close Relationship prototype-matching methodology (Onishi & Gjerde, 1994) and it brought the possibility to compare Japanese attachment styles to American ones. This study is one of the first applications of it in Japanese samples.

Method

Subjects and procedure:

The subjects of this study were 104 university students consisted of 50 men and 54 women. Their age was 18 to 26 years olds (M=19.9). They were students in psychological course. The two scales of attachment style as follows were administered simultaneously to the students in the psychological classes.

Measurements:

Two scales for attachment styles were used. One is the Experience of Close Relationship prototype-matching methodology (Onishi & Gjerde, 1994) using the 48 items of the Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) scale (Hazan & Shaver, n.d.). The other is the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS: Toda & Takuma, 1988).

1, ECR prototype-matching methodology (ECR')

The ECR prototype-matching methodology is originally intended to assess adult attachment styles in relation to "romantic partners". In this study, however, the instructions were modified to include other important figures and people in general. Two instructions were used.

1) To rate relationship to the most intimate person, including romantic partners as well as close friends, parents, or any kinds of persons to whom subjects feel most intimate.
2) To rate relationship to people in general. In this case, some expression of ECR was changed in order to describe social interactions with people in general.

The ECR prototype-matching methodology offers three prototypes; secure, preoccupied and dismissing. Each item was asked 4-point Likert-taype scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Ratings provided by each subject were correlated separately with each of the three prototype descriptions. For each subject, the ensuing correlations represent a score of each attachment style.

2, Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)

This scale was developed according to the Hazan and Shaver's attachment model. It consists of 18 items, 6 for each attachment style. Each item was asked on 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. It was validated by various personality measurements and widely used in Japan.

Results and discussion

Table 1 showed that correlations between the same attachment styles in ECR' to the most intimate person and to people in general. These correlations were comparatively high. So it can be said that people show the same attachment styles even if measured by different instructions in ECR'.

Table 2 and 3 showed Correlations among attachment scores of ECR' to the most intimate person, and correlations among attachment scores of ECR' to people in general. These results indicated that secure scores and preoccupied scores in the two versions of ECR' were comparatively close and they were not clearly discriminated from each other. This tendency was more salient in ECR' to people in general.

Table 4 and 5 showed correlations among attachment scores of ECR′ to the most intimate person and sub-scales of AAS, and correlations among attachment scores of ECR′ to people in general and sub-scales of AAS. Because the correlations between each attachment style in ECR′ to people in general and AAS were comparatively high, it can be said these two scales tapped the same domain of attachment style. However, the moderate correlation between the same attachment styles in ECR′ to the most intimate person and in AAS seems to indicate that attachment styles in relationship to a specific person might be different from attachment styles in social relationship in general. This issue will be remained for future researches.

These results also indicated that preoccupied scores in ECR′ and secure scores in AAS were comparatively close and they were not discriminated from each other. That is, the persons who showed high preoccupied score in ECR′ which represents certain behavioral tendency in attachment situation were not always insecure if they measured by the well used attachment scale in Japan which generally represented personality trait in social situation.

Conclusions

1, Within ECR′ to the most intimate person and to people in general, the same attachment styles were comparatively close. However, in both versions of ECR′, the preoccupied style was not discriminated from the secure style.

2, In comparison with AAS, the preoccupied style in ECR′ both to the most intimate person and to people in general were not discriminated from the secure style in AAS.

3, Although it has been known in the researches in the States that the preoccupied attachment style is not clear to define in behavioral basis, this study more clearly described the ambiguity of the preoccupied attachment style by comparison with the attachment scale well validated in Japan.

4, The scores of attachment styles in ECR' are derived from descriptive behaviors to certain attachment objects. So it can be different from the scores of attachment style in AAS which are concerned with behavioral trait in social situations.

5, Considering that Amae or interpersonal dependency is characteristic of Japanese social interactions, it might be acceptable and sometimes desirable for people to seek physical closeness and dependency on certain attachment objects. Therefore, people who showed such tendency are expected secure in Japanese society.

According to the results of this study, people who showed the preoccupied attachment style in ECR' became secure when measured by AAS, because ECR' judged people who showed dependent behaviors or Japanese-like tendency to be preoccupied on the basis of the attachment style prototype. It can be said that incapability of discrimination between the preoccupied and the secure attachment style in ECR' is partly caused by this attachment style prototype which is based on behavioral patterns in the American samples. Attachment behaviors that are critical for discriminating attachment styles can be different between cultures.

6, This study was one of the first applications of ECR to Japanese samples. So in order to discuss these issues, further researches with ECR will be

expected in Japan.

Onishi, M. 1998 Experiences in Close Relationship protptype-matching methodology. Japanese version 1.0

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Table 1

Correlations among attachment scores of ECR to the most intimate person and to people in general

	Intimate person		
	S	P	D
People in general			
S	.512	-.037	-.273
P	-.007	.615	-.486
D	-.374	-.477	.636

S=Secure P=Preoccupied
D=Dismissing

Table2

Correlations among attachment scores of ECR to most intimate person

	S	P	D
S			
P	-.116		
D	-.547	-.685	

S=Secure P=Preoccupied
D=Dismissing

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Table 3

Correlations among attachment scores of ECR to people in general

	S	P	D
S			
P	.007		
D	-.499	-.791	

S=Secure P=Preoccupied
D=Dismissing

Table 4

Correlations among attachment scores of ECR to the most intimate person and sub-scales of AAS

AAS	S	P	D
ECR			
S	.325	-.337	-.219
P	-.029	.339	-.240
D	-.230	-.031	.378

S=Secure P=Preoccupied
D=Dismissing

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Table 5

Correlations among attachment scores of ECR to people in general and sub-scales of AAS

AAS	S	P	D
ECR			
S	.514	-.425	-.434
P	.078	.551	-.401
D	-.331	-.151	.616

S=Secure P=Preoccupied
D=Dismissing

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